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Review of the Korea Archives of Buddhist Culture of the Academy of Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University

The Academy of Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University has created and is running the Korea Archives of Buddhism Culture (KABC), the compilation and translation of various achievements of Korean traditional Buddhist culture, which can be accessed through its website at <https://kabc.dongguk.edu>. The archives are constituted mainly of the Combined Buddhist Canon, *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism*, the Newly Collected Buddhist Literature, and the Goryeo Doctrinal Canon. The archives also provide other achievements, including those formed in collaboration with other agencies, such as Narrative Portrayal, Modern Buddhist Magazines, Modern Buddhist Literature, Photos of Modern Buddhism, Joseon Temple-Printed Book List, and the Database of the Names of People Appearing in Joseon-era Buddhist Archives. The present article summarizes the previous work leading up to the formation of the archives, reviews the current status, and explores ways to further improve and develop the archives.

Behind the Project to Build the Archives of Buddhist Culture: Dongguk University's History of Publishing and Digitalizing Buddhist Texts

The Institute of Electronic Buddhist Texts at Dongguk University, which was founded in 1997 and later renamed the Institute of Electronic Buddhist Text and Culture Contents (EBTC) in 2008, received support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) to carry out the project to digitalize the Hangeul Buddhist Canon, which is the translation of the Goryeo Buddhist Canon, and *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism*, which is the collection of all Buddhist literature written by Koreans.

The Hangeul Buddhist Canon is the translation of the Goryeo Buddhist

Canon and some of the collections of writings of eminent Korean Buddhist monks into Korean. The project to translate and publish the texts was led by the Dongguk Institute of Scripture Translation. *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* is the transcription of Buddhist literature written by Koreans in classical Chinese since the period of the Three Kingdoms. The project was led by the Dongguk University Compilation Committee, and the results were published by the Dongguk University Press. The EBTC carried out the digitalization of the published texts in response to the increasing demand for digitalized material today.

Among the two projects, the EBTC began working on the digitalization of *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* first, from 1999 to 2007, for a total of 8 years. The results were produced as 2,000 CD-ROM discs. The EBTC worked on the project to digitalize the Hangeul Buddhist Canon from 2001 to May 2012, and the results can be accessed via the EBTC website. The EBTC's digitalization projects, carried out during a time when PCs were not yet as popularized as today, were cutting-edge endeavors for its time.

However, the CDs containing *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* could not be utilized for more versatile purposes, since it was simply a digital reproduction of the text albeit equipped with a search function. The Hangeul Buddhist Canon, which was not created into the CD-ROM disc format and instead accessible via the website, was more efficient but nevertheless unable to be widely used due to problems of correlation with the original text or the quality of the search function. This shows how both digitalization projects did not sufficiently grasp the demands of the users or consider how the digitalized works could be used and applied.

In 2011, the Hangeul Buddhist Canon digitalization project by the EBTC and the first stage of the project to annotate and translate *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* were both completed. The Academy of Buddhist Studies has taken on the role to combine the achievements of these two bodies and has newly launched the Archives of Buddhist Culture as a result.

Development of the Project to Build the Archives of Buddhist Culture

Dongguk University has been home to several independent institutes related to Buddhist culture, such as the Institute for Buddhist Culture, the Dongguk Institute of Scripture Translation, the EBTC, and the Institute for the Study of Jogye Order, each of which has been carrying out various projects separately. In 2009, the Academy of Buddhist Studies, headed by Robert Buswell, was created as the umbrella organization. In 2011, a team was put together to lead the project to create the Korea Archives of Buddhism Culture (hereafter, the ABC Team), and plans were made to compile the achievements to date and newly expand the work on the Goryeo Buddhist Canon, the Hangeul Buddhist Canon, and *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism*.

In May 2011, the Academy of Buddhist Studies submitted the proposal,

“The Project to Build the Archives of Buddhist Culture (ABC),” to the MCST and launched the project starting from 2012 upon receiving funding from the MCST as well as Dongguk University.

The ABC Team consisted of the compilation team, the annotation and translation team, the database team, and the public relations team. The compilation team visited and investigated the sites storing the documents, took photographs of the documents, and conducted bibliographical research of the documents based on over 50 criteria. The new textual material collected through this process is currently provided under the category of Newly Collected Buddhist Literature in the archives. The annotation and translation team, while continuing to translate *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism*, published the newly collected material as new sourcebooks or translated works. The database team was in charge of typing in the text of the original material, creating images, matching the original with the translated text, and developing the archival system.

Table 1. The Entire Process of the Project Carried out by Dongguk University

-	Previous Work		Institute of Electronic Buddhist Texts (EBTC) at Dongguk University [CDs, Website]	Academy of Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University, Archives of Buddhist Culture (ABC) Team [Archives of Buddhist Culture]
Dongguk Institute of Scripture Translation	(Photocopy) Photographic Print of the Goryeo Buddhist Canon 48 Volumes in Total (1976)	→(Annotation and Translation) Hangeul Buddhist Canon 318 Volumes in Total (2001)	→ Digitalization of the Original Text and Translation of the Goryeo Buddhist Canon	→ Provides Access to the Combined Buddhist Canon (Photocopy, Original Text, Translation)
Dongguk University (Compilation Committee, University Press)	(Compilation) The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism 10 Volumes in Total (1989) +Supplementary Editions Volume 11 to Volume 14 (1992–2004)	→(Annotation and translation) The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism in the Korean Language (2007–2011, 2012–2021)	→ Digitalization of The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism (1997–2011)	→ Provides Access to The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism (Original Text, Translation)
-	-	-	-	(Newly Added Areas) - Newly Collected Buddhist Literature - Goryeo Doctrinal Canon -Other

Structure of the Archives of Buddhist Culture

The archives, which can be reached at <https://kabc.dongguk.edu>, is divided into the following 10 categories: Combined Buddhist Canon, Complete Works of Korean Buddhism, Newly Collected Buddhist Literature, Goryeo Doctrinal Canon, Narrative Portrayal, Modern Buddhist Magazines, Modern Buddhist Literature, Photos of Modern Buddhism, Joseon Temple-Printed Book List, and the Database of the Names of People Appearing in Joseon-era Buddhist Archives. The user can search throughout all categories. The present article will provide a brief overview of the 10 categories by largely grouping them into the Combined Buddhist Canon, premodern Korean Buddhist literature, modern Korean Buddhist literature, and other texts.



Figure 1. Homepage of the Archives of Buddhist Culture

The Combined Buddhist Canon Database

The Combined Buddhist Canon database is made up by the Goryeo Buddhist canon and the Supplementary Buddhist texts housed at the Janggyeonggak Pavilion at Haeinsa Temple. By searching each scripture, the user can access the original text in classical Chinese, the translated text in contemporary Korean language, and the image, as well as the bibliography and bibliographical introduction. Simultaneously providing the three versions of the image, original text, and translated text together makes it easier for the user to understand and utilize the Buddhist scriptures for further bibliographic purposes.

Table 2. The Structure of the Combined Buddhist Canon Database Provided by the Archives

1	2	3	4
In order of Scripture Name	Korean Alphabetical Order		
In order of the Scripture Number	Original Order of the Woodblocks		
By Classification System	Main Scripture	Second Edition of the Canon	Added Canon to the Second Edition of the Canon, Canons in the Catalog of Newly Authorized Buddhist Teachings
		First Edition of the Canon	Mahayana, Hinayana, Book of Holy Figures
		Supplement to the Canon	Esoteric Buddhism, Collected Writings, List, Flower Garland Section
	Supplementary Edition	Lists of Featured Scriptures	
		Quotations from Zen Teachings	
		Canons from the Flower Garland Section	
		Worship and Repentance	
	Four Types of Higher Consciousness	Madhyamagama (Middle-length Discourses)	
By Subject	Doctrine	Studies on Doctrine, Overview of Foundation, Basic Doctrine, Itemized Discussion on Mahayana, Basics of Mahayana	
	Teachings on the Way	Essays Elucidating the Doctrine	
	Self-cultivation	Basic Self-cultivation, Methods of Self-cultivation	
	Faith and Practice	Precepts, Edification, Basic Faith and Practice, Mandala, Bodhisattva and Buddha, etc.	
	Syncretic Buddhism	List, History of Buddhist, Dictionary, Biographies	
	Apologetics	Doctrinal Dilemmas, Heterodoxic Doctrine, Criticism of Heterodoxy, Basics of Apologetics	

Premodern Korean Buddhist Text Database

The Complete works of Korean Buddhism

The Database of *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* is the reproduction of published Buddhist texts as a database. The works are categorized by the order of the book title, the name of the author, or the order of the books. Like the other databases, the user can look up classical Chinese characters of the original texts as well as Korean-language terms in the translated texts. Each work provides the original text, translated text, and image, as well as the bibliography and bibliographical information.

The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism is the compilation of Buddhist books written by Koreans from the period of the Three Kingdoms up to the 20th century and was published by the Dongguk University Press. The series consists of a total of 324 Buddhist books. 147 books among these have been translated to Korean and uploaded on the database. The work to upload the Korean translation of the rest of the books is currently ongoing.

Newly collected Buddhist literature

The Newly Collected Buddhist Literature refer to the database of the list and photographs of the textual material owned by temples and libraries. Most of them are Buddhist literature published or copied by hand during the premodern period.

Currently, the list of documents owned by 4 institutions—the library and museum of Dongguk University, the library of Joong-Ang Sangha University, and the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University—and 28 Buddhist temples including Haeinsa and Tongdosa can be accessed through the archives.

The original text, translated text, and bibliographical introduction are not provided for each individual item. The actual work to translate, to provide a bibliographical introduction, and to create a systematic database has not yet been carried out.

Joseon temple-printed book list and the database of the names of people appearing in Joseon-era Buddhist archives

By using these databases, users can access the bibliographical information of books printed by temples during the Joseon dynasty and look up the names of people in this literature.

Table 3. The Structure of the Database Provided via the Website

1	2
In the Order of Book Title	Order of Book Titles
By Feature	Ritual, Temple Records, Personal Commentaries, Vernacular Translations, Narrative Portrayal
By Edition	Woodblock, Wooden Type, Metal Type, Handwritten Manuscripts, etc.
By Subject	Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka, Vocabulary, Works Written in China, Works Written in Korea, Works Written in Japan, Dharani, Non-Buddhist writings, Documents
Publication Year	Order of Historical Period
Publisher	Alphabetical Order of Publisher
Owner	Alphabetical Order of Owner

The database of the Joseon Temple-Printed Book List is organized by title, period, region, publisher, document categorization, royal-reigning period, and mountain name. The database is extremely useful in the way each item provides a link to the database of Newly Collected Buddhist Literature and Person Name of Buddhist Books. For instance, the search results of a Buddhist book titled “A” lets the user know that “A” is included in the Newly Collected Buddhist Literature and allows the user to see the names of people in that book.

The Database of the Names of People Appearing in Joseon-era Buddhist Archives was provided by Namdo Cultural Research Center at Suncheon National University, which created the database from 2018 to 2021 with funding from the National Research Foundation of Korea. The database is therefore listed separately from the other categories of the archives. The items are organized based on bibliographic information, which is further organized by title of book, period, region, and document categorization, and information of the person, which is further structured by name of person, period, region, and responsibility at temple.

Modern Korean Buddhist Text Database

Modern Buddhist literature

This database of Buddhist literature published during the modern period currently only provides the contents of the *Complete Works of Great Master*

Baek Yongseong. It is likely that the database will be upgraded after researching modern Buddhist literature in the future. The database of the *Complete Works of Great Master Baek Yongseong* is structured by the order of the table of contents listed in the text and the order of the book title. Users can view the original text, its image, and the translated text in one screen.

Modern Buddhist magazines

Users can access 31 types of modern Buddhist magazines through this database. The database is organized by order of book title and publication year. Although users can view the table of contents of each magazine and its image, the main contents of the magazines are unfortunately not fully available for search. Currently, the database stores the entire contents of the 19 issues of *Joseon Buddhism Monthly* (1912–1913), the first magazine that exists, and the contents of Issue 1 to Issue 65 of *Buddhism* (1924–1933), a vast magazine consisting of 108 issues in total, which the user can search. For the rest of the issues, only the titles of the articles are listed, and the user must search the title of the article and view the photographic copy to see the main contents of the article.

Other Databases

Narrative portrayal

This database was built by collecting narrative portrayal among the photographs of the compiled material taken by the ABC Team. The items are accompanied with interpretation by experts to facilitate the research of scholars. The database is structured by order of book title, content categorization, publication year, and publisher. The high-quality images provided by the database allow the user to view even very minute details.

Goryeo doctrinal canon

This database is based on the material provided by the Research Institute of Tripitaka Koreana (RITK). It is distinct from the other databases in that it is a list of the institutes holding the documents and the bibliographic information featured in the *Newly Compiled Comprehensive Catalogue of the Doctrinal Canons of Various Schools*, which was compiled by the Goryeo State Preceptor Daegak Uicheon (1055–1101). The database currently is only in the form of a list and does not provide the original image or text of each item. The items are organized

by catalog of the doctrinal canon, compilation country, author, compilation style, book binding, edition, publication year publisher, and holding institution.

Photos of modern Buddhism

This database was formed by creating a list of the names and holding institutions of various Buddhism-related photographs dating between 1877 and 1998 and organizing them by main entry term, field, years, and region. The EBTC under the Academy of Buddhist Studies provided this database, which they created from 2017 to 2023 with the funding of the National Research Foundation of Korea.

The items organized by field are further subdivided by religious community, education, Buddhist temple, organization, person, literature, ritual, Buddhist architecture, Buddhist art, and activities, which shows the wide range of photographs that were collected.

The Future of the Archives of Buddhist Culture

The Archives of Buddhist Culture of the Academy of Buddhist Studies contain diverse documents of the cultural heritage of Korean Buddhism as a database and are regarded as an essential service for both domestic and international researchers of Korean Buddhism. It is not yet clear how the Archives of Buddhist Culture will be maintained, repaired, or expanded. The following points should be considered for the future development of the archives.

First, the archival service should be further improved to fit the user's needs. Currently, the Newly Collected Buddhist Literature, *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism*, the Joseon Temple-Printed Book List, and the Database of the Names of People Appearing in Joseon-era Buddhist Archives exist separately. These should be systematically rearranged based on a certain standard and combined into a database that connects them horizontally. It would be even better to connect the Buddhist scriptures in the Combined Buddhist Canon database as well.

Second, the original text, translated text, and original edition (such as woodblock or hand-written copy) of *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* should match one another. The translated texts in *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* database are not annotated translations of a clean and well-preserved

copy among the woodblock or hand-written copies. For instance, in the case of *Collected Writings of Cheongheodang Hyujeong*, the version in *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* is the corrected copy resulting from comparing 7 or 8 different editions, and this is the copy that was translated into Korean. This means that the image of the original text provided in *The Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* database are not the woodblock or hand-written copies but the corrected text that was published by Dongguk University Press. Considering how the efforts to excavate and photograph the original edition have made some progress, it will be possible to work on providing the original material that matches the annotated and translated text.

Third, the database needs to be further modified, systemized, and arranged under the original copy particularly among Buddhist literature with the same name. For example, in the Newly Collected Buddhist Literature database, if the user looks up the title “Lotus Sutra” among the book titles, the search results include too many identical books. Even if all of the books with the same title are located at different sites, there is no need to display all of them as results when searched by book title. The same goes for other old books. In addition, the search by book title does not distinguish between old books and documents, which is largely inconvenient for the user. The categorization of the literature should be further advanced based on the user’s needs. The group of literature related to ritual, however, is systematically organized based on the comparison and correction of different versions and is expected to provide a clear structure soon.

Fourth, in addition to the abovementioned issues, any inconvenience experienced by the user such as when searching or citing or during matching the original text with the translated text should be resolved. A long-term goal should be set for the archives to continue to upgrade and provide better service as well as connect the database with Taiwan’s Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) and Japan’s *Samgānikīkṛtaṃ Taiśotripitākam* (SAT) to form an archive of East Asian Buddhist culture.

As for now, MCST funding for the project to build and use the Archives of Buddhist Culture has terminated. Starting from 2022, the MCST is supporting the next project to build a platform for K-Buddhism cultural contents. The Academy of Buddhist Studies is currently exploring various ways to maintain and further develop the Archives of Buddhist Culture, which is visited by around 600 thousand people per month from both inside and outside

of Korea. It will be worth looking forward to how the archives will develop in the future.

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